

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *The Archaeology of Disease, 3rd Edition*

REFERENCE: Roberts C, Manchester K. The archaeology of disease. 3rd ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005, 338 pp.

This volume presents a thorough review of the skeletal and dental evidence for the history of disease and the current methodology involved in the differential diagnosis of disease from skeletal and dental tissues. The book also provides a discussion of the archeological contexts in which such evidence is recovered and studied. Roberts and Manchester build on the second edition published in 1995 by presenting improved diagnostic methodology and a lucid discussion of post-1995 developments. As the title suggests, the emphasis here is on interpretation of disease in skeletons of the past recovered from archeological contexts.

The core of the volume consists of discussion of criteria for skeletal disease recognition and examples documented from studies of archeological samples. The diagnostic/specific disease section is organized into chapters on congenital disease, dental disease, trauma, infectious disease, metabolic and endocrine disease, and neoplastic disease. This logical and useful organization is consistent with previous editions as well as other volumes on similar topics.

This edition includes detailed discussion of academic developments in the last 10 years, focusing on the major disease themes covered within the book. The authors note the increasing trend toward considerations of cultural context and broad health/morbidity issues in addition to the traditional attempts within the discipline of paleopathology to document the history of particular disorders. Also recognized are recent efforts directed toward

standardization of recording, database building, multidisciplinary approaches to understanding the history of particular diseases and related themes, advances in diagnostic ability (including new molecular approaches), and new resources available to improve the research effort.

The strengths of the volume include excellent visual documentation of most key topics with 165 figures. The volume very much represents a literature synthesis with 51 pages of entries in the bibliography. This extensive reference list provides abundant opportunities for those seeking greater detail and multiple points of view. Although the volume emphasizes interpretation of disease in skeletons recovered from archeological contexts with a modern clinical perspective, the book is of considerable interest to those working in forensic science as remains recovered in forensic contexts require the same level of interpretation. Of course, proper disease diagnosis of recovered skeletal remains from forensic contexts can also contribute to identification and proper case interpretation. The volume also includes discussion of pseudo-trauma, congenital conditions, and postmortem alterations and how they can be distinguished from the interpretations of perimortem conditions that are so important in forensic analysis.

This up-to-date, comprehensive, well-illustrated, and abundantly referenced volume should prove to be a useful addition to the libraries of all those interested in disease interpretation from skeletal remains.

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